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Upper Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

2.39

Poverty is a relative concept. For some people being poor may mean not having enough to eat; others consider themselves hard-up if they can’t afford to go on holiday. Much depends of course on the cost of living, in other words how pricey basic goods and services are. In the UK one definition of poverty is that you spend more than ten per cent of your earnings on energy – that is, the gas and electricity you use in your home. The trouble with this kind of definition is that something like energy might be much more reasonable in one country than another. So sometimes poverty is expressed as a percentage of average national income – for example, if you earn less than 60 per cent of the average, you are classified as poor. Wealth is also a relative concept. Being well-off doesn’t necessarily mean being loaded and surrounded by luxuries – two cars and a second home in the country. Wealth can also be measured by people’s quality of life. You can be considered rich if you have all that you need – the basic necessities – a good work-life balance and a happy family life.